



Celebrating Fifty Years of Human Space Flight!

Issue пятнадцать - Mar 2011

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Musings from Under the Mountain

It's the first day of the school holidays, and of course, it's raining. I suppose the garden will like it. We have a garden now—and I don't mean the weed infestation out back of Chez Smith. No, courtesy of the city council, we have what amounts to an allotment for a year, complete with a nice mentor to show us what to do. This is called "Growing for Health" - and I have to admit that growing your own not only results in healthy exercise, but it really is dirt cheap. Two punnets of cauliflower seedlings cost \$1 each at the nursery along Tidal Rd (just off the SW motorway at Massey Rd.) and filled two whole rows. That's a couple of dozen cauliflower for the price of one at the market. And don't get me on to supermarket prices for fruit and vegetables. What gives them the right to sell apples at \$3 a kilo or more, when they're just \$1 a kilo at the market? Beats me. (I do recommend the Mangere Saturday morning market—behind Mangere Town Centre from 8am to 1pm or thereabouts—go early to avoid the crowds, you won't regret it).

Speaking of things green, I have to say that the earthquake that caused the Fukushima I nuclear accidents may ultimately lead to far more damage to the earth's environment than it might seem. The usual idiots are out in force, proclaiming the dangers of nuclear power and attempting to deter governments from building nuclear plants. The trouble is, the power to sustain our lifestyle and ever-growing population (we reach seven billion this month) has to come from somewhere! Modern nuclear plants are about as safe and environmentally friendly as it gets, much more so than many of the alternatives. You really have to wonder about the neo-luddites who are protesting about the tidal generators that are to be on trial in the Kaipara Harbour. There are few power sources more green than the tides, and as far as I can see, the people working on this are doing it right, testing for environment impact as they go. Of course, you can always try telling the Greenies to work on their own environmental impact by refraining from breeding, and locking their Remuera tractors in the garage...

The idiot brigade aren't keen on the Space programme either, claiming that it is a waste of resources. Ultimately, however, the Earth's resources are finite, and we have to start getting the resources we need down here from out there. Which is why it's important that we celebrate achievements like that of Yuri Gagarin, who became the first human being to journey into outer space, when his Vostok spacecraft completed an orbit of the Earth on April 12, 1961, fifty years ago this week. Space flight is far more important to the ultimate future of humanity than placating the masses in over-populated US cities. As a wise man once said, "Where there is no vision, the people perish". The big boys have lost the dream, so I guess it's up to ordinary people like us to promote that bright image of humanity spreading forth to the stars.

Jacqui Smith

The View from the Cosy Armchair

"Be not afraid of greatness: some are born great, some achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust upon them". - (Shakespeare – Twelfth Night Act II, Scene V).

And the last bit is exactly what happened to me at the Stella Nova AGM. I wasn't expecting to be made President, in fact it came as a bit of a shock. I just hope I can rise to the occasion and give the office the justice it deserves.

At the moment, the main thing we seem to need is more members. To do that, we need to get Stella Nova out there. How we can do that, especially in this electronic age, I'm not sure yet but I'm open to suggestions. I am also open to suggestions of any changes that members want to make to the running of the club and also any activities that we should be pursuing.

So, if you've got any ideas, please let me, or any of the committee know.

Thanks

Keith Smith
President



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Awakened: House of Night Book 8

by P.C. and Kristin Cast

Published by Atom

Supplied by Hachette

Reviewed by Jan Butterworth

After surviving the Underworld, Zoey and Stark take their relationship to a new level. The bad god Kalona is sharing his soul with Stark after bonding in the Underworld. This is negatively affecting Stark but the good guys haven't realised this yet. Stevie Rae and the group leave school to live underground after the death of one of the most likeable students. Everyone else believes Neferet is good again, while the group know she has killed. Heath comes back as a vessel that carries out the wishes of Neferet and tries to kill Zoey yet again. There was also some exciting battle action.

There were way too many pop culture references and author shout outs. It seemed to dumb down the story a bit and was irritating. This plot was well thought out and tightly written though, with an ending that was not happy, but also not all that sad. It leaves you wondering where the next HON book is going. Things get quite steamy for a few of the characters early on. There is sexual content but it's only slightly more graphic than the Twilight series sexual content. It just explains and hints that they have sex. The series show how friendships are made, relationships are formed and how trust is to be earned. Ok for teens, but not worth bothering with if you're older.



Heaven's Spite

by Lilith Saintcrow

Published by Orbit

Supplied by Hachette

Reviewed by Tosca Waerea

Keep your friends close. Keep your enemies closer. When a new hellbreed appears on the scene Jill Kismet finds herself making nice with Pericles, her sadistic hellbreed 'patron' (for want of a better word), and Melisande, whose loyalties are unknown.

I discovered the Kismet books by accident and have been happily hooked ever since and am now a squealing fangirl of Saintcrow's dark, in your face, gritty and full of action writing style. My addiction to her novels isn't made any better by the fact that this newest addition to the Kismet series is just as good as I had hoped it would be. Jill Kismet reminds me of a darker, more tortured female version of Butcher's wry-talking 'Harry Dresden' – is that blasphemous? She's not afraid to tell it like it is and will take on the bad guy no matter the odds. Which is probably more dangerous than common sense but it's a formula that works for me. Kismet is no shrinking violet to gore and violence.

I read somewhere online that 'Heaven's spite' is the second to last in this series. Saintcrow is not messing around with long and protracted relationships drawn out over some forty books worth of reading. And I take my hat off to the author for one cliffhanger of an ending. Dirty pool! I'm not sure whether to thank her or curse her, but I'm avidly looking forward to the next book.



Tempted by Fate

by Kate Perry

Published by Forever

Supplied by Hachette

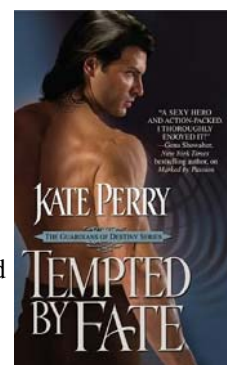
Reviewed by Tosca Waerea

Willow Tarata is a guardian. Of wood, admittedly, but she's still a guardian and, as such, holds a sacred scroll that gives her the power to work the element of wood. Believe me when I say it reads better than I write about it. Years ago Willow's mother was murdered and, since then, her all consuming goal has been to find the man. And kill him. Vengeance, thy name is woman. But the hunter becomes the hunted when the killer frames Willow in a series of bizarre murders that put her in the path of cop Rick Ramirez.

I somehow find myself once again starting a series partway through as 'Tempted by fate' is book three in Perry's Guardians of Destiny series. As a side note: Kate Perry the author is not Kate Perry the singer. Yet I found myself still wanting to hum Perry's music (the singer) while reading Perry's novel (the author). I suppose that says more about my weird sense of humour than it does about the author's ability to craft a solid story.

I can't say I was overly enamoured of the cover for this book (think Smart Bitches Trashy Books 'team back' category). As a person who (shallowly) judges books by their covers it's a little niggle but Perry's action and adventure and the supporting characters more than make up for it. The chemistry between Ramirez and Willow sizzles although I can't help thinking that they jumped into the HEA (happy ever after) moment a little too quickly for my liking. Yes, some romance novel endings are cliché, but I still have to believe in the HEA, I should still have to work for it.

Overall, a good read, but to round out the story a little more I probably should've read the earlier books first and so, that's what I'm going to do. Starting now.



Managing Death

by Trent Jamieson

Published by Orbit

Supplied by Hachette

Reviewed by Tosca Waerea

Steven de Selby's job is never boring but oh, if only it were! In 'Death most definite' Jamieson introduced us to Steven de Selby, whose family was in the business of death. Simply put, his job as 'Pomp' was to send spirits on to their next destination.

In 'Managing death,' book two in the wryly funny - if rather unusual - Death Works series, Steven finds himself trying to organise an upcoming Death conference while stirrers, devourers of all living things, are rising. As if that isn't enough to be getting on with he's still trying to come to grips with a new job and a new relationship.

The angle of death as a business is slyly humorous and very well done and if you're looking for a book that offers something a little different – quirky, black humour – then look no further. 'Managing death' is a solid follow up to 'Death most definite' and I can't wait for the next title to be released!



Stronger than Sin

by Caridad Pineiro

Published by Forever

Supplied by Hachette

Reviewed by Tosca Waerea

In Pineiro's 'Sins of the flesh' Liliana Carrera assists her brother in rescuing Caterina Shaw from Wardwell Laboratories (fringe scientists who perform truly abhorrent experiments on humans). Six months later, where this story picks up, Liliana is working in a newly set up facility to work on finding a cure for Wardwell's patients. When the FBI brings in Jesse Bradford he is suffering from an extremely rare - not to mention wholly disturbing - bone disease that was responsible for abruptly ending his football career. Liliana is tasked with finding a way to reverse the damage.

This is one very violent read that is not meant for the squeamish or faint of heart. Poor Bradford! The hero seemed to spend a good chunk of the novel being beaten, drugged, blackmailed, threatened and tasered. In fact, when Carrera first meets Bradford, his so-called guardians (are they or aren't they FBI agents?) have just beaten, tasered and drugged him (not necessarily in that order) so his behaviour is somewhat erratic and violent. Not a great start to any relationship, really, not by any stretch of the imagination. Add to that the fact that the hero can be a bit of a tool at times (explained, I guess, by the fact that he's trying to keep his secret to protect those he loves) and I'm surprised Liliana finds anything likeable about him at all. But she does which is just as well for the storyline.

This is like Fringe (the tv series) only with romance and fans of Lora Leigh's 'Breeds' series will enjoy Pineiro's 'Sins' books. Me? I'm too squeamish to read further than this one. What people will do in the name of science is grotesque and even the romance angle doesn't entice me.



The Good Fairies of New York

by Martin Miller

Published by Piatkus

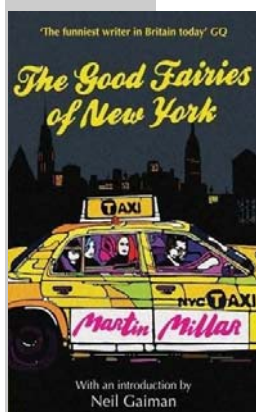
Supplied by Hachette

Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

Humour is a funny thing, they say... and what makes one person laugh leaves another wondering where the joke is. It's evident from the introduction that Neil Gaiman found this novel hilarious, and since I like his work, I figured the humour here ought to work for me. Well, it didn't. Not that it's a bad work, it's well-crafted and clever, and

has a sweet ending, but it's too much another one of those inner city US sit-coms that just leave me cold. It is quite American in flavour, being (mostly) set in New York as you may deduce from the title, and very... urban. Classic New Zealand comedy tends more to the rural, so there's a humour gap right there.

Two groups of British fairies find themselves, more or less, simultaneously, stranded in New York. Morag and Heather, fleeing the avenging McLeod fairies, end up with the poorly socialized slob, Dinnie, (who lives above a theatre where a production of "Midsummer



Night's Dream" is in rehearsal) and Kerry, who lives in a nearby apartment. Kerry has Crohn's disease, a decidedly unfunny condition. You have to feel sorry for her. In fact, I found myself pitying most of the human characters in this book - which is something that gets in the way of enjoying the humour as far as I'm concerned (I can't tolerate "Mr. Bean" for that very reason). The other fairies are fleeing the Cornish fairy king, and end up in Central Park. New York proves to have its own fairies, and there's a fair amount of fairly amusing slapstick as various objects are passed from person to fairy and around and around.

Another thing that gets in the way of the humour is my absolute ignorance of American punk rock - a subject about which I have no desire to be enlightened. Consequently, it's highly probable that other readers would get far more fun out of this book than I did. (And, alas, though it is about fairies, it's not a book for children - far too many blatant sexual references and unfriendly word choices).

ConText

Short Story and Artwork Contests

SHORT STORY

All SF, fantasy, or horror stories of up to 5,000 words in length will be eligible.

To enter, please e-mail your story, as an attachment in .rtf (Rich Text Format), to the convention e-mail address:

enquiries@context.sf.org.nz.

Include a cover sheet with:

- your name
- contact details
- story title
- number of pages



Pages must be numbered. DO NOT include your name or other identifying information on the manuscript itself.

Final judging by Catherine Asaro

ARTWORK

All SF, fantasy or horror themed art - 2D, 3D, painting, sculpture, modelling or other forms - is eligible.



Please bring your artwork along to the convention, and present it in person to the registration desk to enter.

Final judging by Frank Victoria.

Sir Julius Vogel Nominations

Professional Awards

Best Novel

Barking Death Squirrels by Douglas A. Van Belle
The Heir Of Night by Helen Lowe
The Questing Road by Lyn McConchie
Tymon's Flight by Mary Victoria
Geist by Philippa Ballantine



Best Young Adult Novel

Aria by Rowina De Silva
Ebony Hill by Anna Mackenzie
Guardian Of The Dead by Karen Healey
Into The Wilderness by Mandy Hager
Summer Of Dreaming by Lyn McConchie

Best Novella / Novelette

A Tale Of The Interferers - Hunger For Forbidden Flesh by Paul Haines
L by Bill Direen
Her Gallant Needs by Paul Haines

Best Short Story

Consumed by Lee Murray
High Tide At Hot Water Beach by Paul Haines
The Future Of The Sky by Ripley Patton
The Interview by Darian Smith
I've Seen This Man by Paul Haines

Best Collected Work

A Foreign Country - New Zealand Speculative Fiction by Anna Caro and Juliet Buchanan (Eds)
The Care And Feeding Of Your Lunatic Mage by Douglas A. Van Belle
2010 Semaphore Anthology by Marie Hodgkinson (ed)
Rare Unsigned Copy by Simon Petrie

Best Artwork

Barking Death Squirrels Cover by Emma Weakley



Internal map in *The Heir Of Night* by Peter Fitzpatrick

Tymon's Flight Cover by Frank Victoria

Best Dramatic Presentation

This Is Not My Life - Pilot Episode
Kaitangata Twitch - Pilot Episode

Best Production / Publication

Semaphore Magazine - Marie Hodgkinson
White Cloud Worlds Anthology - Paul Tobin (Ed)
The Art Of District 9: Weta Workshop - Daniel Falconer (Ed)
White Cloud Worlds Art Exhibition at The New Dowse Art Gallery - Leanne Wickham

Fan Award Nominees

Fan Production

Doctor Who - Podcast
 Paul Mannering, BrokenSea Audio Productions
 The Cloud
 Paul Mannering, BrokenSea Audio Productions

Fan Publication

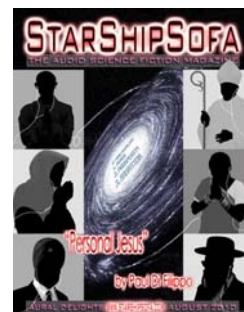
Novazine - edited by Jacqui Smith
 Au Contraire Convention Booklet - edited by Au Contraire Committee

Fan Writing

Strange Matter - John Toon (Phoenixine)
 Musings From Under The Mountain and other contributions - Jacqui Smith (Novazine)
 Blue - Michele Powles (on her website)
 Uncorked - Broderick Wells (Novazine)

Fan Artwork

Cover For: StarshipSofa 150 - Gino Moretto



Special Award Nominees

Best New Talent

Karen Healey - author of the Young Adult urban dark fantasy "Guardian of the Dead".
 Mary Victoria - whose first novel, 'Tymon's Flight', was released in August 2010.

Services To Fandom

Ross Temple - who has "consistently assisted fans in both Australia and New Zealand for a very long time. He has been there on committees, providing help, providing advice and in a thousand other ways."
 Sue Martin-Smith - founder of the Wellington-based Phoenix Science Fiction Society, for "all the work that Sue Martin-Smith has done for the local New Zealand science fiction and fantasy community, but in particular for the work that she did for three national conventions, (Wellcon B, Norcon and ShakyCon) and for the founding of Phoenix."

Services To Science Fiction, Fantasy And Horror

Simon Litten - who "has provided consistent and good information about new books over a significant period of time to fans through his reviews on the sffanz site."

April 12th: Out To Launch!

Just to show my age, I was not even conceived when Lieutenant Yuri Gagarin was launched aboard Vostok One on April 12th 1961! But I certainly *was* around on the same date in 1981. Nineteen eighty-one seems like a very long time ago now. I was a 15 year old schoolboy back then. In the days before regular satellite TV and the Internet, it was a really big deal to stay up late at night to watch a space launch on television. And in my life, New Zealand national television had never shown a live space launch before.

1961: In 1961, the science of rocketry was barely emerging from a generation of experimentation and guesswork. It was yet to blossom into a mature and versatile engineering discipline. The launch vehicle that Lt. Gagarin climbed aboard was an already veteran design, having had its origins as a nuclear warhead-equipped Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM). In the 1950s and '60s it was common for space launchers to be of military origin. In the U.S. the Redstone, Atlas and Titan launchers started their lives as ICBMs. Now the world's then, two space programs were converting swords into plowshares by man-rating them. Actually, that's not a fully correct analogy. For the next 20 years, space would be yet another arena for the Cold War. It was not until 1995 when the first Mir Space Station-Shuttle docking occurred did the Cold War aspect of space travel finally evaporate. That had been a long time in coming.

It is said that one of the reasons Yuri Gagarin was chosen for mankind's first orbital flight was because of his smile. That should not surprise you when you remember his sunny, handsome visage, which has been reproduced down through the years in books, posters and commemorative stamps. Yuri Alexeyevich Gagarin was a good pilot, a decent engineer, was physically fit and he was emotionally unflappable in a crisis. Indeed, he was said to be as cool as a cucumber during the stresses of Cosmonaut training and would work very hard, always doing what he was told as well. Like all of his Cosmonaut colleagues he was very competitive and undoubtedly knew what was at stake. To be the first human being in space was an accolade only one person would ever bear through *all* of recorded time.

Gagarin rose to the top of the pile. His destiny was set. It also didn't hurt that his political pedigree was flawless. He had come from impeccable 'peasant' stock, being the son of a carpenter who was also a loyal member of the Communist party. It really helped the image of the Soviet system that an 'ordinary' citizen could come from humble beginnings to attain one of the highest honours any man ever could.

When Yuri Gagarin's A-1 booster roared aloft at 9:07am Moscow time on April 12th 1961, did he or his engineering and political architects *truly* understand the age that they were unleashing upon the world? Unlikely.

Vostok One completed a single orbit of the Earth then commenced a fiery and dangerous atmospheric re-entry – an umbilical cable had failed to separate, causing the still-attached capsule and Service Module to spin through the skies like some sort of celestial bola, giving Gagarin a frightening ride. But finally the cable burned through. And then shortly thereafter Gagarin had to endure a harrowing ejection seat ride, landing in a field before some startled farm workers. It was not deemed safe to ride the steel ball Vostok capsule all the way down to the ground; for the parachute recovery system was rather basic and would give a rough touchdown. For years afterward the Soviet authorities hid the fact that Gagarin had *not* landed with his spacecraft. They were worried that a technical loophole in International Aeronautical law might disqualify Gagarin as the first man in space because he had not both taken off *and* landed in the same vehicle! After the flight he was promoted to Major, a leap of two whole ranks.

In 1961 a significant portion of the world still did not have television, telephones or advanced labour-saving home appliances. Indeed, in previous generations, many Soviet citizens did not have access to decent education and too many were actually illiterate. But by the mid 1960's, many Russian citizens were highly educated and motivated, inspired in part by the technical achievements of their giant country.

Major Gagarin became the most famous man on the planet for a time and travelled the world as an ambassador for Soviet achievement and doctrine. Such were the honours bestowed upon him that Gagarin purportedly let some of it go to his head. Food and drink took a toll on his trim figure and one day he nearly knocked himself senseless, jumping out of a hotel window to escape his enraged wife, Valentina. He was trying to have his way with a young female staff member. The end result was a concussion and a scar above his left eyebrow. The official explanation was a wonderful piece of spin-doctoring: the propaganda held that Major Gagarin had been injured whilst saving his baby daughter from falling.

It was said that Gagarin became more powerful and influential than some of his political masters and was not averse to throwing his weight around. This caused much jealousy, even amongst his fellow Cosmonauts. Yuri Gagarin began to chafe at the trappings of his celebrity, and he campaigned hard to get back to work and be assigned another spaceflight. He was finally assigned as backup to the ill-fated Soyuz 1 test flight on which Cosmonaut Vladimir Komarov was tragically killed. The Soyuz control system and parachute had malfunctioned. After this, authorities would never let Gagarin train for spaceflight again, too afraid of the bad publicity should their most famous Cosmonaut also be killed on a subsequent test flight. Yuri Gagarin himself met an untimely end on March 27th 1968 when his Mig 15 training jet crashed, for reasons that are still not entirely clear more than 40 years later. The Soviet hierarchy paid him the highest posthumous tribute by placing his ashes in the Kremlin Wall in Moscow's Red Square.



by
Matthew
Pavletich

1981: By the end of the 1970s, satellite communications, Earth observation and weather forecasting had become irreplaceable in our societies. And humans living in space had become an iconic fact. Science fiction began to supplement and even unfortunately replace the reality of humans in space in the hearts of the general public. It was almost as romantic as the real thing when Hollywood sent Captain Kirk and Luke Skywalker out into the Universe. Except for poorly reported (*in the West*) improvements to the duration of humans in space aboard Russian Salyut space stations, the mid-to-late seventies seemed bereft of new manned spaceflight achievement. Spaceflight watchers around the world waited through the many delays to the Space Shuttle program.



flight in history. Later that day, Young proclaimed somewhat optimistically that “*Mankind was not far from the stars.*”

And proclamations that the Space Shuttle would open the way there were also far too optimistic. Although understandable, too much was the burden of promise placed on the Space Shuttle. Promises that the remarkable, advanced new spaceship would fly every two weeks were eventually shown to be, frankly, complete *bull*. But that’s not to say that the Shuttle wasn’t a remarkable achievement. It most certainly was. The mini-fleet of Space Shuttles are the most complex machines ever devised by man. And but for

two very unfortunate exceptions – the loss of *Challenger* in 1986 and *Columbia* in 2003, the Shuttle has been proven a relatively safe and versatile spaceship. But it is not cheap to operate and has required an enormous amount of maintenance to keep it safe.

The less patient, ignorant of just how far the technology (*and budget*) envelope was being pushed, complained endlessly. The Shuttle was fodder for fiscal and technological bullies. But those who had designed, built and were to *fly* the Shuttle believed in her. And so John Young and Robert Crippen climbed confidently aboard *Columbia*, a brand new spacecraft, on the morning of April 11th, 1981. I stayed up most of the night to watch this incredible mission unfold on television. Live broadcasts of this nature were completely unknown in New Zealand. And to the best of my knowledge, they **STILL** are! But *Columbia*’s balky computers forced a delay to the first launch and the spectacular take off finally took place next morning on April 12th. This was a very happy coincidence as it was the 20th Anniversary of Yuri Gagarin’s flight. The symbolism was not lost on spacewatchers, for when Gagarin went aloft in 1961 the world was changed. It was changed again with the Shuttle.

Of course, Television New Zealand did not broadcast the second launch attempt. Their indifference towards positive space coverage continues today. What if the *Columbia* had exploded? TVNZ, one of the smallest TV news organisations in the world would have missed a very BIG story. I listened to the launch on the radio. Happily, the news story was very good and *Columbia* and her crew pulled off a great mission. For the two days *Columbia* was aloft, I became somewhat of a space expert at school. I even did a mini-lecture on the Space Shuttle during science class. Quite independently of so-called international experts, I too came up with the phrase “zipper effect” to describe a worst-case scenario for *Columbia*’s missing heat shield tiles! But it proved an unfounded fear. Young and Crippen safely piloted *Columbia* down to Edwards Air Force Base in California two days after launch. I “wagged” school that day to watch the landing on TV. It thrilled me and I can still remember the hairs on the back of my neck standing up when *Columbia* touched down safely on the Rogers Dry Lake bed. John Young bounded down the stairs of the ship to punch the air in jubilation. He was understandably happy at the successful conclusion of the riskiest test

The Shuttle’s were supposed to have a Spaceplane successor by the early 2000’s, the *Venturestar*. But this and *every other* succeeding design to replace them were cancelled, mainly due to budgetary reasons and sometimes for political reasons. The Shuttle Orbiters were subsequently forced to soldier on longer until their retirement in the year of 2011. But penny-pinching politicians and Flat-Earth anti-space bullies have long memories. I would have loved to have been at Kennedy Space Center on April 12th 2012 to see the Venturestar Clipper *Enterprise* liftoff. But unless another kind of “Space Race” comes into being, this may never happen. History has proven that the space race gave birth to a generation of fantastic scientists and engineers in many nations. And the only thing that is holding them back today is a lack of funding and leadership. I pray that the next fifty years give us even greater achievement though at this stage, I’m only in a glass half-full mood about the future.





Directed by Gore Verbinski
 Produced by Gore Verbinski, Graham King, John B. Carls
 Written by John Logan
 Story by Gore Verbinski, John Logan, James Ward Byrkit
 Starring Johnny Depp, Isla Fisher, Abigail Breslin, Alfred Molina

Seeing as the school holiday crop of new animated delights to amuse the boy child was looking a bit thin (we're planning to go see "Rio" next week, and "Hop" is evidently every bit as silly as it sounds) we went to see a film that is nearing the end of its run, namely a little movie about a city chameleon named Rango.

It opens with musical Mexican owls introducing us to Rango—the lizard's going to die, they sing. Said owls appear frequently through the film, adding narration, often breaking the fourth wall. We first meet Rango as a bored pet chameleon acting out imagined dramas with the toys in his terrarium; including an orange fish, a plastic tree, and a Barbie torso. Yes, really.

That terrarium is in the back of a car, driving up what I'm fairly sure is meant to be that long, hot and dusty road up through the desert from Flagstaff to Las Vegas. It is flung out of the car in an accident, and Rango finds himself in the desert. He first meets a somewhat run-over armadillo, who talks about his quest to go to the other side.... And tells Rango where to go, across the desert, to find a town named Dirt. On the way, he meets up with an iguana named Beans, a feisty pioneer farmer who doesn't want to give up her family's land. Here we learn of the water shortage which is the constant theme of the movie— I

seriously recommend you don't forget to take your water bottle when you go to see "Rango". This is one thirst-inducing movie! We're taken to the town of Dirt, a beautifully drawn, decaying desert ghost town, inhabited by animals. It's up to Rango to find his inner hero, find out what happened to the water, and save the town. Without, I might add, ever firing a gun. Rango's methods remind of the Doctor—he's slightly mad, big on ingenuity, and likes to talk his way out of trouble.

Visually, the movie is quite brilliant, every bit of dust and grime lovingly animated. It's well-written and has a strong, if predictable, plot. And I just loved the "Ride of the Valkyries" scene. But, and this is a big but, I lost a lot of dialogue because supporting characters delivered their lines in a broad south-western accent. This is one reason why this movie isn't getting such a good reception in New Zealand as it did in the US. Another is that we generally don't dig Westerns down under. I haven't even seen "High Noon", or "Once Upon a Time in the West", and I don't think I'm the only one. This means a lot of the references, and therefore a lot of the humour, were lost on us. Finally, this isn't really a movie for little kids. There is a huge devilish snake, a bird with an arrow stuck through its head, a hanging scene, and a whole lot of adult references. My 12-year-old enjoyed it—he tells me he'd put "Rango" in his top five talking animals movies—and so did I, but I wouldn't show "Rango" to young children if you don't want them to have a month's worth of nightmares.

WRITER'S WORKSHOP

with
Catherine Asaro
 Limited to 10 participants

When: 3 days, Wednesday – Friday, 1 – 3 June, 9.00 am – 5.00 pm
 Where: Barrycourt Quality Motel, 10 – 20 Gladstone Road, Parnell 1052
 Cost: \$150.00 pp for the course (free parking onsite)
 Bring: Pen & paper or laptop
 Lunch not included

About the tutor

Catherine Asaro is the author of more than 20 Science Fiction and Fantasy novels and many novella and short stories. When not writing and making appearances at conventions and signings, Catherine teaches math, physics, and chemistry. She is a member of SIGMA, a think tank of speculative writers that advises the US government as to future trends affecting national security. A former ballerina, Catherine Asaro has performed with ballets and in musicals on both coasts and in Ohio. She founded and served as artistic director and a principal dancer for two dance groups at Harvard.

For more information about Catherine go to:
<http://www.catherineasaro.net/>
 Please contact enquiries@context.sf.org.nz for a registration form.

Uncorked

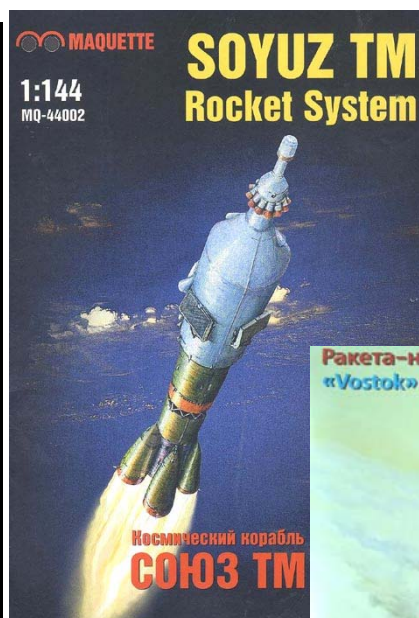
by Broderick Wells

There's a good, or bad, reason for the 'zine being late this month – me. That's right, possums, me and I'm proud of it. So why was I late? You can well ask, but I won't bother telling you, mostly because you'll think it's a load of old cobblers and blame me for being a lazy *rs* b*st*rd with an overly fertile imagination. Absolutely spot on, but that is not the reason.

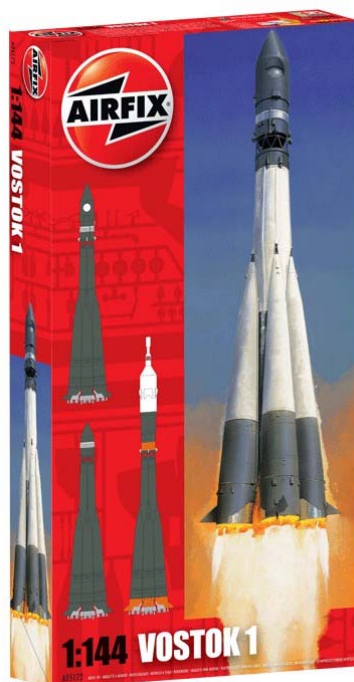
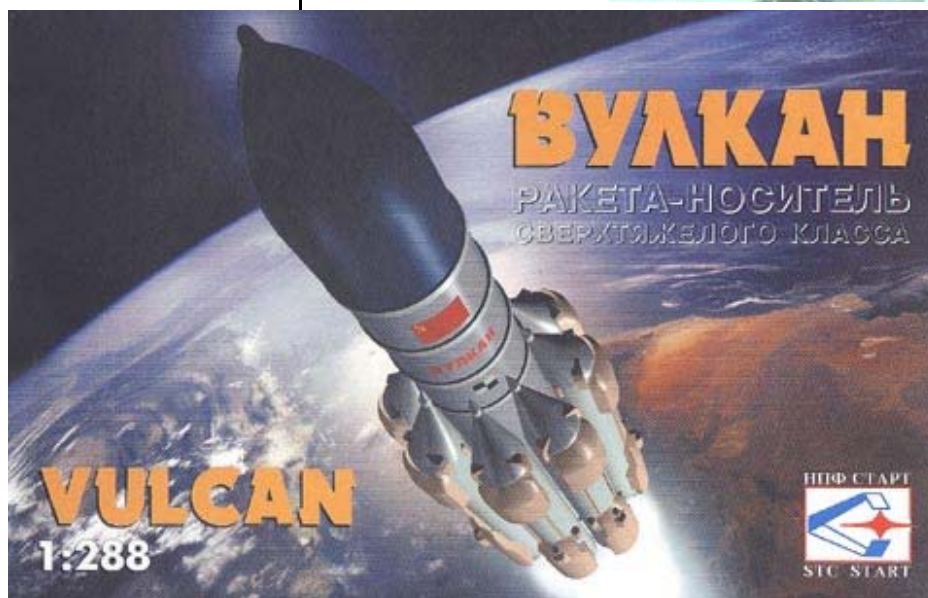
Those of you who pay attention to such things will have noticed the fiftieth anniversary of the first manned space flight. Some will even have commented, and possibly lamented the lack of expensive theatre afforded by competing space programmes. But Yuri Gagarin was first man in space, courtesy of the Soviet rocket design team. Of course, there is the vexed question of how much the Soviet rocket designers owed to the German kit they acquired at the end of WW2 (there's no question as to how much the Americans owed the Germans: The Vanguard was pretty much a V-2/A-4). Nope, not telling (see first paragraph).

The sceptics claim that the Soviets owed everything to the Germans, completely ignoring the work of Sergei Korolev and Valentin Glushko at the Soviet Jet Propulsion Research Institute (which has the wonderfully anachronistic abbreviation of RNII). The Red Army had had a lot of experience firing Katyusha rockets during WW2 – they were cheap to make and made a magnificent volume of noise when fired. And they were constantly improved, made cheaper and simpler as the war progressed, as well as produced in several “calibres”. On the other hand, the Soviets also sought and found the V-2 blueprints and impressed approximately 150 German scientists from the V-2 production team. Still not telling.

That the Soviets had done some research over and above the V-2 can be seen from a number of firsts: ICBMs, multi-stage rockets, first object in orbit and so forth. Not bad, and certainly not catch-up. And, of course, you can purchase model kits of these, and other, Soviet space hardware. But be prepared to look hard or read Russian, because most of the Western producers, like Airfix and Revell focus only on the American effort. Shame that – just 'cause there was a Cold War on doesn't mean the “bad guys” weren't heroes. Not telling, ever. Not even if you bribe me with booze (well, maybe for a bottle of Blue).



Russian rocket kits!



Not a Russian rocket kit.

[I thought you might like to know that there IS a current Airfix kit for the Vostok—and you can even buy it at <http://www.modelcraftsandhobbies.co.nz/> for \$NZ48—Ed.]

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The Sky at Night – May 2011

Saturn is getting more prominent in the evening sky. It is located near Spica in Virgo. As it rises, Saturn is the leftmost of the two bright objects and has a yellow hue. The other way to identify Spica is to look for the diamond shape of Corvus nearby. The star nearest Virgo has a fainter star nearby, representing the beak of the crow, and the two points towards Spica, as if the crow is attempting to peck out the jewel in Virgo's belt.

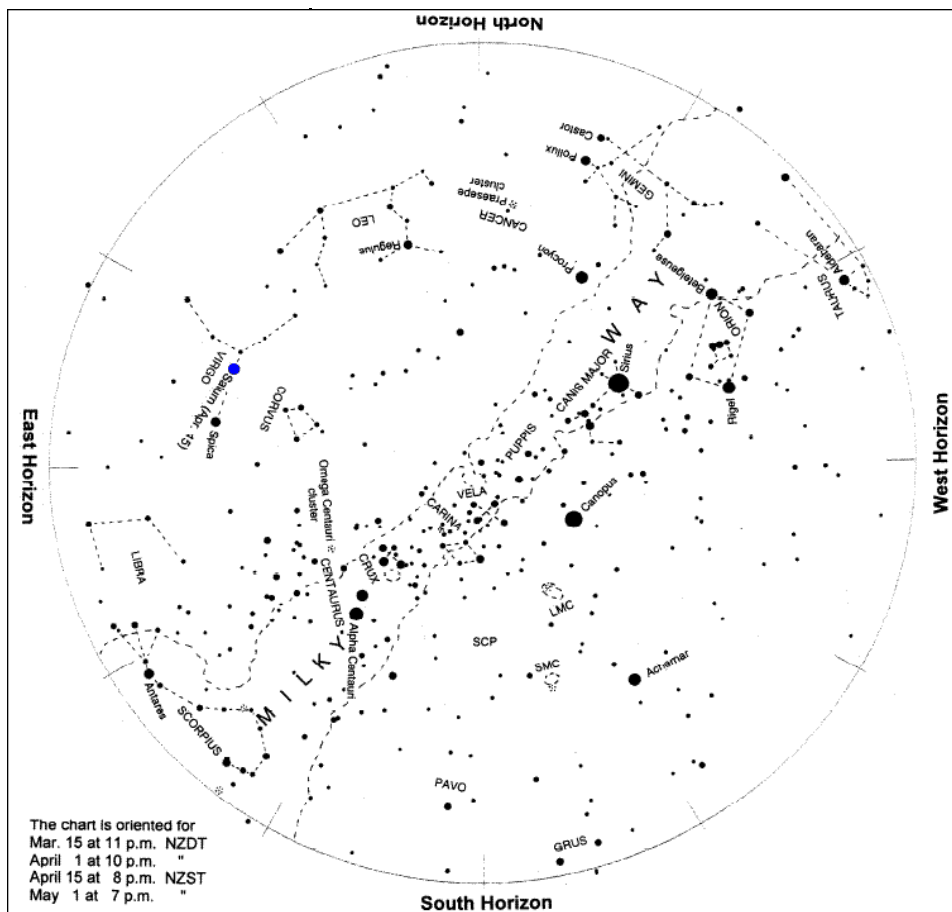
The other planets are clustering together in the dawn sky. Mercury will be at it's greatest elongation on the 8th. The closest they will cluster in the dawn sky is on the 12th.

Leo is due north now, dominating the northern sky. Scorpio is starting to rise in the east and Virgo (as mentioned above) is in the north east. Gemini is in the north west and Orion is starting to disappear in the twilight. Below Virgo, and low on the horizon is Arcturus, the bright star in Bootes. Near Arcturus and looking towards Leo is the faint constellation of Coma Berenices, part of which is the Coma Star Cluster. Some representations of Virgo have her reaching out to grasp Coma Berenices.

Virgo contains many galaxies, which can be seen with small telescopes. Many of these galaxies are part of the Virgo Supercluster but a notable one that isn't is the Sombrero Galaxy (M104). It's an easy target for a telescope and looks rather spectacular. Some of the Virgo Supercluster extends into Coma Berenices.

Leo also contains many galaxies. It also contains the star, Wolf 359, which has appeared in many SF works, especially noted for being the site of the big battle with the Borg in ST-TNG.

Looking south, the Southern Cross and Centaurus is getting higher in the sky. Centaurus straddles the Southern Cross and looks to be attacking (or defending itself against) the constellation of Lupus, the Wolf. The rest of the southern sky is dominated by Argo, which used to be the largest constellation in the sky until it was broken up into three parts, Carina, Vela, and Puppis. Carina contains Eta Carina, a rather massive star which



some scientists believe could go supernova at any time. There is some rather spectacular nebulosity associated with it.

As well as containing Omega Centauri, Centaurus also contains the rather unusual galaxy, Centaurus A.



Events:

- 3rd May – New Moon
- 11th May – First Quarter Moon
- 17th May – Full Moon
- 25th May – Last Quarter Moon

More information can be found at:

- <http://www.astronomy.co.nz/pub/home.asp>
- <http://www.astronomy.org.nz/>
- <http://www.skyandtelescope.com/index.html>

Obits

March 17

Michael Gough, (aged 94), British character actor, familiar to us all as the butler, Alfred Pennyworth, in the “Batman” movies. He had an extensive career, including roles in the Hammer Horror movies, and in Doctor Who as the villain in the “The Celestial Toymaker” (1966),



and as Councillor Hedin in “Arc of Infinity” (1983). He also played the automation-obsessed, wheelchair-using Dr. Armstrong in “The Cybernauts”, one of the best remembered episodes of “The Avengers” (1965). He was awarded a Tony award in 1979, and BAFTA awards in 1957 and 1972.



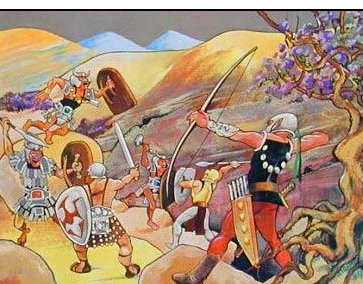
March 18

Jet Harris, (aged 71), British musician, bass guitarist for “The Shadows”.



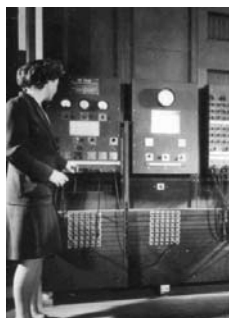
March 19

Jim Roslof, (aged 64), American fantasy artist, best known for his work in illustrating many early Dungeons & Dragons publications including the original “Keep on the Borderlands”.



March 20

Dorothy Young, (aged 103), American actress, assistant to Harry Houdini, and the last surviving member of Houdini’s touring troupe.



March 23

Jean Bartik, (aged 86), American computer programmer, one of the original programmers of the ENIAC.

March 26

Harry Coover, (aged 94), American prolific inventor of, among many other things—Super Glue!

Diana Wynne Jones, (aged 76),

British author, mainly of fantasy for children and young adults. She gave us “Howl’s Moving Castle”, and the Chrestomanci series amongst many others. She was the author many of us looked to as “so much better children’s fantasy writer than JK Rowling”. The awards tend to agree, and it has to be said that the popularity of the Potter books allowed many a librarian to introduce children to the works of Diane Wynne Jones. And I have to admit, the movie of “Howl’s Moving Castle” was very cool.



April 2

Bill Varney, (aged 77),

American sound editor who won collaborative back-to-back Academy Awards for Best Sound for “Star Wars: Episode V - The Empire Strikes Back” in 1980 and “Raiders of the Lost Ark” in 1981. He also received nominations for “Dune” in 1984 and “Back to the Future” in 1985.

April 9

Jerry Lawson, (aged 70),

Game over for the American videogame console engineer, who invented the games cartridge, designing the Fairchild Channel F video game console, the first of its kind, in the early 1970’s.



April 14

Trevor Bannister, (aged 76),

British actor, best known as junior salesman Mr. Lucas in the sitcom “Are You Being Served?”.



April 19

Elisabeth Sladen, (aged 63),

“The Sarah Jane Adventures” have sadly come to a sudden end with the death from cancer of British actress, Elisabeth Sladen. She got the part of investigative journalist Sarah Jane Smith in 1973, opposite Jon Pertwee as the Doctor, after guest starring in “Z-Cars”. She continued through the change of Doctors, until the 1976 serial “The Hand of Fear”. She returned in 1983 in “The Five Doctors” and again in “School Reunion” in 2006 with David Tennant. This was so successful that she was given her own popular spin-off series, “The Sarah Jane Adventures” which lasted four seasons. This is one feisty lady whom we really will miss.



O B I T S

compiled
by
Jacqui
Smith

ConText 2011

New Zealand National SF Convention

ConText will be held over Queen's Birthday weekend in Auckland, Friday 3rd to Monday 6th June. The venue has been changed to the Quality Hotel Barrycourt, 10-20 Gladstone Road, Parnell.

Catherine Asaro, an American author of both science fiction and fantasy novels, will be the GoH. The fan GoH will be Lynelle Howell, editor of Phoenixine and an active Wellington fan. Also attending will be Helen Lowe, the Christchurch based author of the Heir series, of which the first 'The Wall of Night' was released earlier this month. The crew are also in negotiations with other potential guests.

This is a marvellous opportunity for anyone who enjoys science fiction to participate in 4 days of sharing their hobby with other fans. There will be discussion panels, organised gaming, costuming events, the Quiz, a video stream and a chance to buy science fiction related items. The winners of the 2011 Sir Julius Vogel Awards for Excellence in New Zealand Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror will be announced on the Sunday night at the Conjunction Banquet.

Full and day memberships will be available if you wish to attend for one or two days only. Organised events will be going into the early evening. The bar will be open all day until late.

The Barrycourt Hotel is holding a block of rooms for convention attendees. Book directly and quote the reference number 64913 to ensure you receive the rates.

Phone: +64 9 303 3789
Facsimile: +64 9 377 3309
<http://www.barrycourt.co.nz/reservations@barrycourt.co.nz>

Standard King Room

King bed, ensuite bathroom, coffee & tea facilities. LCD TV, DVD, writing desk. Some rooms with amazing city & harbour views. Rate includes car parking & daily newspaper (on request). \$109.00 per night including GST (maximum 2 pax)

Double Room

1 Queen & 1 Single bed, ensuite bathroom, coffee & tea facilities, private balcony, LCD TV, DVD, writing desk. Some rooms with amazing city & harbour views. Rate includes car parking & daily newspaper (on request). \$129.00 per night including GST (maximum 2 pax)

Stella Nova Wiki:

http://stella-nova.sf.org.nz/wiki/index.php/Main_Page

Nova Zine Back Issues:

<http://stella-nova.sf.org.nz/wiki/index.php/StellaNova:Novazine-new>

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This Month:

- | | |
|-------|---|
| BOG | Saturday 16 April, 7:30pm
at the Secretariat in Papakura
(email for details). |
| BOOK | None this month due to too many of
public holidays on 25th April. |
| SPACE | Friday 6th May, 7:30pm
at the Secretariat in Papakura
(email for details). |

Next Meeting:

Wednesday 18 May, 2011 at 7:30pm
Auckland Horticultural Centre,
990 Great North Road, Western Springs



Upcoming Events:

June 3-6th 2011 **ConText**
2011 New Zealand NatCon in Auckland
http://context.sf.org.nz/wiki/index.php/Main_Page